VDH VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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News Release

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STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF LEAD IN DRINKING WATER SAMPLING AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND CHILD DAYCARE FACILITIES

(Richmond, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has completed a study of lead levels in the drinking water at randomly selected Virginia child daycare facilities and elementary schools. The study shows that lead levels in drinking water at most of these facilities are below the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) action level.

"We are pleased with the sampling results and thank the facilities that participated in the study," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

VDH developed a lead level action plan last May focusing on lead monitoring efforts for child daycares and elementary schools. Staff from local health departments collected first draw samples at the most frequently used water fixture at each of the facilities. Additional samples were taken after a 60-second flush of the chosen faucets. Samples were delivered to the state's Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services for analysis.

Of the 237 randomly selected sites that participated in the study, eight yielded samples with lead concentrations greater than the action level of 15 parts per billion (ppb) in the first draw. The action level was established by EPA to minimize long-term exposure to lead through water ingestion. After flushing the faucet for 60 seconds and re-sampling, only one faucet continued to show a lead concentration above the action level. VDH is working with this facility with elevated levels to determine why the lead concentration is above the action level and initiate appropriate corrective actions. The facility is new and therefore had not yet completed routine sampling for lead in drinking water. Although the special sampling detected elevated lead levels, it is likely that routine sampling would have also identified the problem. Children at this facility are being provided with bottled water until the issue is resolved.

"People can significantly reduce lead levels in their drinking water by flushing the faucet for 60 to 90 seconds after it has been idle for more than six hours," Dr. Stroube said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule of 1991 requires all public water systems to conduct sampling for lead in drinking water at least once every three years. Child daycare facilities and elementary schools that have their own water systems are also subject to this rule. However, since most elementary schools and child daycare facilities get their drinking water from public water systems, they are not required to sample their water fixtures for lead.

VDH continues to implement the federal Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA) of 1988, which recalled drinking water coolers with lead-lined water reservoir tanks and banned new drinking water coolers with lead parts. The LCCA also established a technical assistance program in order to support state activities to reduce lead contamination in schools.

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Lead contamination rarely occurs in source water, such as wells or reservoirs. Elevated lead levels in drinking water are usually caused instead by corrosion of lead pipes or plumbing fixtures. Residents may choose to contact a plumber to find out whether their home's fixtures contain lead. Other precautions people can take at home to reduce the amount of lead in their drinking water include:

- running the faucet for 60-90 seconds if the home water supply has been idle for more than six hours
- cooking only with cold water
- using a filter approved by the National Sanitation Foundation www.nsf.org/consumer/

For more information about lead in drinking water, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/dw/Lead.asp.

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